

South Dakota Character Education



This picture is from a short video on caring. If you want to view it, and others, you will find them on the web site for Foundations for a Better Life <http://www.forbetterlife.org/>

SD DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

November, 2003

“Wisdom
is knowing
what to do.
Virtue is
doing it.”

David Starr Jordan
“Forbes Magazine”

WEB SITE:

A web site sponsored by the United States Environmental Protection Agency has a lot of information about environmental issues and how we can care for and protect the environment. The web site listed is the one that is directed towards high-school age students, but the home page has a lot more information.

<http://www.epa.gov/highschool/>



Engaging a New Generation of Citizens (Excerpts from the ASCD Curriculum, Winter 2003)

Thomas Jefferson asserted that a sound education would produce enlightened citizens able to sustain a balanced democracy. Yet some educators say Jefferson's vision remains unfulfilled in most U.S. schools.

In his book *A Time to Learn* George Wood writes that high school...is democracy's finishing school—the last shared experience that all Americans will enjoy; the place where the skills and dispositions that citizens in a democracy need should be secured and nurtured in all our youth.

High school's most important goal is not “getting kids jobs,” Wood insists, but helping kids develop habits of heart and mind that will help them be good citizens. Some of the things he does at his school are:

- Find as many ways as possible for students to take responsibility for the daily life of the school.

- Find ways for students to apply the critical thinking skills that are essential to citizenship.

- Practice the rights and the responsibilities of the U.S. Constitution in school.

High schools are not the only place students can experience the democratic process first hand. A fifth grade teacher designed her students' entire year around citizenship education. To start the school year, her class holds a mini-constitutional convention in which students create a document complete with a preamble and an outline of their rights and responsibilities as “citizens” of the class.

Service learning is another practical way to activate a civics curriculum. When such projects are done well, students put their interdisciplinary skills to work to solve a real problem in the larger community. Students find it rewarding because the projects are serious. It makes students want to live up to expectations.

Reviving students councils and classroom meetings engage students in the democratic process.

The governance structure of the school is inextricably linked to the methods of the teachers. “You can't do it for the kids unless you first do it for the teachers.”

Citizenship is not just what you drop in the ballot box, you have to live and breathe democracy every day.

Un-Thanked People

When Wm Stidger taught at Boston University, he once reflected upon the great number of un-thanked people in his life. Those who had helped nurture him, inspire him, or cared enough about him to leave a lasting impression. One was a school teacher he had not heard of in years. He wrote a note to thank her.

The reply he received, written in the feeble hand of the aged began, “My Dear Willie, I cannot tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my

eighties, living alone in a small room...and like the last leaf of autumn, lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue-cold morning and it cheered me as nothing has in many years.”

Who are some of the un-thanked people in your lives? It may not be too late to put some real meaning behind Thanksgiving and send them your “thanks”.

CHARACTER EDUCATION CONFERENCE SCHEDULED July 8,9, 2004

Ramkota Convention Center,
Pierre, SD

Keynote speakers:
Hal Urban
Deb Austin Brown

Breakouts by representatives of district who have good news to share about their character education efforts, and other presentations with emphasis on character education.

SEE YOU THERE!

SD DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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WE ARE ON THE WEB:

www.state.sd.us/deca/CSCF/CEP/

- Current newsletter
- Resources and other links
- Student opportunities
- Professional development

THE SD PARTNERSHIPS:

The South Dakota Character Education Partnership grant was received during the summer of 2001. The goals for the grant are:

- To establish high quality character education implementation sites that embrace the virtues that are embodied in SD Code, as well as other character traits identified by the local community, in a manner which effectively models the principles of good character through the actions of school staff and students.
- To develop the lifelong skills and ethical behaviors necessary to be contributing citizens in a democratic society by integrating character education practices within the total school and community.
- To effectively link existing local, state and federal resources that merge effective school research and character development in a caring community.
- To maintain or improve student academic achievement while expanding student understanding of, commitment to, and action upon core ethical values.

Contact people for the 10 partnership districts:

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Ways to Develop Enthusiasm Within Yourself

These are ideas put together by Jo M. Stanchfield after interviewing a large group of adults:

1. Smile
2. Laugh
3. Carry yourself with enthusiasm
4. Exercise
5. Eat healthy foods—not too much fat or sugar
6. Get enough rest
7. Compliment other people
8. Associate with lively, interesting people.
9. Become a role model—speak encouraging words to those around you.
10. Learn/try something new
11. Do something to help someone
12. Look at your students and think of their potential and your part in releasing it.
13. Look at each day as being new and challenging.
14. Stimulate your mind—listen to/take part in interesting discussions, watch a good movie, read a book, listen to music.
15. Take time to be quiet—to think things through.
16. Look for and enjoy beauty everywhere – in nature, art, music, and people.

GRANTS:

\$1000 Service-Learning Grants available for National Youth Service Day (April 16-18, 2004). State Farm Insurance is accepting applications. Teachers, administrators and young people are eligible to apply and the deadline is December 8, 2003. For more information go to: http://www.ysa.org/Awards/overview_parent.cfm



“The inclination, joined with the ability to serve mankind, one’s country, friends and family... should indeed be the great aim and end of all learning.”

Benjamin Franklin in “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania.”